Amendment to the Claims:

1-4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) A method of treating a food product comprising:

spraying an exterior of the food product with a decontaminant solution containing an antimicrobial agent which includes peracetic acid for a sufficient time to microbially decontaminate the exterior of the food product, the peracetic acid concentration being from about 1000 to about 2000 ppm, and

recirculating the sprayed decontaminant solution.

6-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the food product comprises hot dogs and the method further includes, prior to the step of contacting the exterior of the food product:

removing the hot dogs from casing skins.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Previously Presented) A method of treating a cooked food produoct comprising:

a) spraying the cooked food product with a solution comprising peracetic acid in a first chamber; and

b) drying the cooked, sprayed food product in a second chamber.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, further including:

c) after step a), rinsing the food product with a rinse fluid in a third chamber intermediate the first and second chambers.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, further including:

conveying the food product through the first and second chambers on a conveyor system.

16. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus ~~for treatment of a food product comprising~~ of claim 19 wherein the contacting means includes:

a first chamber;

spray nozzles disposed in the first chamber for spraying a decontaminant solution over the food product, the decontaminant solution including peracetic acid;

a source of the decontaminant solution;

a pump fluidly connected with the source of the decontaminant solution and the nozzles for supplying pressurized decontaminant solution to the nozzles[[;]]

~~a second chamber;~~

~~a source of a drying gas connected with the second chamber for drying the decontaminated food product; and~~

~~a conveyor system which conveys the food product through the first and second chambers~~.

17. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[16]] 29, further including:

a third chamber intermediate the first and second chambers, the conveyor system conveying the food product through the third chamber;

a source of a rinse fluid connected with the second chamber which delivers a rinse fluid to the second chamber for rinsing the decontaminated food product.

18. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus ~~for treating a cooked food product comprising~~ of claim 30 wherein the decontamination station includes:

(a) a means for spraying the cooked food product with a solution comprising peracetic acid in a first chamber; and,

(b) a means for drying the cooked, sprayed food product in a second chamber.

19. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for treating a food product comprising sausages, the apparatus comprising:

a means for cooking the sausages in casings;

a means for removing the sausages from casings;

a means for contacting an exterior of the decased sausages with a decontaminant solution containing an antimicrobial agent which includes peracetic acid for a sufficient time to microbially decontaminate the exterior of the decased sausages.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, further including:

a means for rinsing the microbially decontaminated decased sausages to remove the decontaminant solution.

21. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, further including:

a means for sterile drying the decontaminated decased sausages.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the peracetic acid in the decontaminant solution is at a concentration of from about 100 to about 4000 ppm.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the means for contacting the food product with the decontaminant solution includes a means for spraying the decontaminant solution over the decased sausages.

24. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the food product is sprayed with the decontaminant solution for a period of from about 10 seconds to 5 minutes.

25. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the food product is sprayed with the decontaminant solution for a period of from about 1 to 2 minutes.

26. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the means for contacting the food product with the decontaminant solution includes a means for transporting the food product on a conveyor past spray nozzles which spray the docontaminant solution over the food product.

27. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 23, further including:

a means for recirculating the sprayed decontaminant solution.

28. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 23, further including:

a means for aseptically packaging the food product after drying the food product.

29. (New) The apparatus of claim 16 further including:

a second chamber;

a source of a drying gas connected with the second chamber for drying the decontaminated food product; and

a conveyor system which conveys the food product through the first and second chambers.

30. (New) An apparatus for treating sausages, the apparatus comprising:

a cooking device in which the sausages in casing are cooked;

a decasing device which removes the cooked sausages from the casings;

a microbial decontamination station which contacts an exterior of the decased sausages with a decontaminant solution containing an antimicrobial agent which includes peracetic acid for a sufficient time to microbially decontaminate the exterior of the decased sausages.